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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CHINA VISIT, PRESIDENT
OBAMA'S ADDRESS ON AFGHANISTAN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage December 2 on the city mayors' and county magistrates' elections around the island, which are scheduled to be held on December 5, and on the sudden resignation of Japan's representative to Taiwan. Several papers also reported on U.S. President Barack Obama's scheduled address at West Point Wednesday morning to reveal his plan for Afghanistan.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed President Obama's recent visit to China and said few people, not even AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt, really understand the whole picture of Obama's China visit. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," written by former AIT Chairman Nat Bellocchi, urged Washington to "make crystal clear that Taiwan's sovereignty and territorial integrity should not be infringed upon in any way, so that the people of Taiwan can make a free decision on their future." A separate "Taipei Times" op-ed also discussed Obama's first trip to China, saying that "what he did achieve looks superficial, while what he gave up seems substantial." With regard to President Obama's address on Afghanistan Wednesday morning, a column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" described it as Obama's most important address on the United States' foreign affairs and national security and his most controversial policy declaration since he assumed office. The article lamented that, even though Obama's campaign slogan was "change," his Afghanistan policy showed that all he can do is follow the course laid down by his predecessor. End summary.

¶3. President Obama's China Visit

A) "Taiwan Card, Iran Card"

James Tu, the publisher of "Apple Daily," wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 540,000] (12/2):

"[U.S. President Barack] Obama's [recent] trip to China was ridiculed by the U.S. media as having returned [to the United States] empty-handed, but, as it stands now, it may not necessarily be the case. During an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting held in Geneva last Friday on how to deal with Iran's nuclear programs, both China and Russia voted in favor of censuring Iran. ... The outside world knows very little about the details of Obama's visit to China, and many of the talks are still in progress; even AIT Board [sic] Chairman Raymond Burghardt may not be able to grasp the whole picture. Even though China agrees that the IAEA should censure Iran now, it does not mean it will agree with the United Nations to impose sanctions against Iran, or the way the United States and Europe will impose those sanctions in the future. But judging from the fact that Obama's attitude toward Iran has turned anxious and impatient, and from the change in China's policy, there is no reason for Taiwan to feel good about itself. One cannot help but sweat over the new round of haggling between Washington and Beijing!"

B) "What Was Said and What Should Have Been"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT Chairman and a special adviser of the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (12/2):

"US President Barack Obama's trip to China continues to be the subject of hot debate in Western media. ... The Obama team seems to have been too eager to 'create a positive atmosphere' to encourage China to go along on a number of undeniably important issues, such as global warming, environmental protection, North Korea and Iran. In doing so, it allowed the Chinese leaders to outmaneuver the Americans. This occurred not only in terms of information control surrounding public events -- such as the 'town hall meeting' with a programmed audience of Communist League Youth members in Shanghai -- but also in terms of substantial issues relating to both Tibet, East Turkestan and Taiwan.

"For Taiwan, the biggest setback of the visit was the mention in the US-China Joint Statement of 'sovereignty and territorial integrity.' Chinese President Hu Jintao said during the joint press conference that the Chinese side appreciated the statements by Obama that 'the US side ... respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity when it comes to the Taiwan question and other matters.' Not unexpectedly, government-controlled Chinese media, such as Xinhua news agency and the China Daily, immediately reported that Obama recognizes China's sovereignty and territorial integrity on Taiwan and other issues. If that is what Beijing believes was said, the Obama administration may want to clarify that this is in direct contradiction of US policy, which holds that Taiwan's status must be determined peacefully and with the assent/consent of Taiwanese. That is the essence of what was laid down in 1979 in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and in 1982 in the Six Assurances. The problem is that there is significant tension between the TRA and the Three OBAMA'S ADDRESS ON AFGHANISTAN

Communiquis, the main one being that the TRA represents the US side of the deal as prescribed by Congress, while the Three Communiquis represent what China wanted.

"In light of the changing situation in Asia, how the US deals with a small, democratic Taiwan on the one side and an increasingly assertive -- and important -- giant on the other will require careful planning. It would be a grave mistake, however, if we allowed Taiwan's existence as a free and democratic country to be held hostage or to be whittled away by the rulers in Beijing. Taiwanese have worked hard to achieve their democracy. It is essential that the US make crystal clear that Taiwan's sovereignty and territorial integrity should not be infringed upon in any way, so that the people of Taiwan can make a free decision on their future."

C) "Obama Was Outwitted by Beijing"

Zhang Wei, a lecturer in Chinese economy at Cambridge University, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (12/2):

"US President Barack Obama's first trip to China was like a splendid stage play. The performance was long rehearsed in both Washington and Beijing, because both governments needed at least the appearance of a successful visit. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) needed Obama's unequivocal endorsement of China's increasingly important international role in order to buttress its domestic legitimacy. The US needed China's cooperation to demonstrate the effectiveness of Obama's new strategy of collaborative global leadership. Now that the play is over and the applause has died down, it is time to check the balance sheet and see how much Obama achieved and how much he conceded.

"On the positive side of the ledger, Obama received ceremonial treatment not normally accorded to visiting foreign leaders, even other visiting US presidents, demonstrating the importance China's government attached to the visit. ... Obama also initially appeared to make some progress in giving voice to the universal values of human rights and democracy. He met with students in Shanghai in his favorite 'town hall' format, which allowed for face-to-face discussions with young Chinese. Moreover, China's government allowed the Nanfang Zhoumo, the country's most liberal newspaper, to

conduct a 12-minute exclusive interview with Obama. ...

"And the negative side of the ledger? Obama gave up two things that have usually been at the top of the agenda when US presidents meet with Chinese leaders. First, Obama did not openly criticize the Chinese government's notorious human rights record, nor did he use his influence to persuade China to release any prisoner of conscience, as his US predecessors always did when visiting the country. ... Second, Obama did not seriously seek to resolve existing US-China economic disagreements, particularly over trade. ... So, on balance, Obama's first trip to China achieved relatively little. Moreover, what he did achieve looks superficial, while what he gave up seems substantial. Of course, this is partly because of the changes in the relative economic and political power of the US and China over the past decade, and especially during the current global economic crisis. However, the sizable deficit on the balance sheet of Obama's China trip could have been much lower if Obama had paid more attention to substance. It seems that Hu is more skillful than the polished Obama at maximizing his gains at little cost."

14. President Obama's Address on Afghanistan

"Sorrow of Obama"

Columnist Lin Po-wen wrote in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (12/2):

"Following more than two months' deliberation and ten high-ranking military meetings, [U.S. President Barack] Obama finally drew out his sword and decided to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan, increasing the total number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan to 100,000. Obama chose to deliver his speech on sending more troops [to Afghanistan] at West Point, instead of hiding behind the Oval Office in the White House and talking to himself in front of the camera, because this is his most important address on U.S. foreign affairs and national security and his most controversial policy declaration since he took over the helm. He needs [to deliver it at] a historical site, and by speaking to thousands of students and soldiers, he will be able to bring his articulateness into full play and achieve the highest goal of convincing the American people.

"One can tell Obama's personality, mentality and his limitations from his lengthy decision-making process. During his campaign, Obama rolled out the most resounding and attractive slogan --
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'change' to the voters. But when it comes to his Afghanistan policy, it has ruthlessly been demonstrated that he is unable to 'change;' all he can do is follow the course laid down by his predecessor, or even adding more mistakes to it. Just like [former U.S.] President Lyndon Johnson during the Vietnam War era, who allowed the commanders on the frontline of the battle, the Pentagon and a bunch of hawks to lead him by the nose, this [decision] will be the sorrow for Obama and a tragedy for the United States.

"... The dove presidential candidate, Obama, has transformed into hawk President Obama, who would rather offend the liberals, most of whom are anti-war, and a few anti-war conservatives than seek 'change' in the Afghanistan battlefield. All he can do is to add more [mess] to the mess left behind by [President George W.] Bush and [Vice President Dick] Cheney by continuing to send young Americans to die in the gloomy valleys of Central Asia. Obama stressed that he is sending more troops in exchange for gradually withdrawing the U.S. military from the battlefield. This is just daydreaming -- the United States will only send more U.S. troops [to Afghanistan] and get stuck, and more U.S. soldiers will die.

"The United States has spent one trillion U.S. dollars in Iraq, and it will cost Washington at least 300 billion U.S. dollars each year for the war in Afghanistan. The United States, which is suffering from the economic downturn and rising unemployment rates, will very likely be pulled down by the war in Afghanistan. ... The United States is stuck in the meaningless quagmire of the Afghanistan war, while China, India and Brazil are developing their economies with all their strength. It is no wonder that the U.S. national strength has been slipping downhill, and Obama is just another pushover that only engages in empty talk!"

